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B8 CLAIMS

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1. A telecommunications network including a network based telephone answering system to which calls for a particular network destination may be diverted, the network including control means programmable by customer action to select conditions under which some or all calls for the destination are diverted, the telephone answering system further including means selectively to store respective messages and to associate such messages with a particular one of a plurality of customers of the destination in response to predetermined characteristics for an incoming call, and means to selectively play messages only on receipt of signals identifying a particular customer.
2. A telecommunications network as claimed in claim 1, in which the telephone answering system is responsive to receipt of a diverted call to cause information identifying each of said plurality of customers to be transmitted to a calling customer, said system connecting means responsive to calling customer action to associate a subsequently deposited message with a particular one of said plurality of customers.
- a 3. A telecommunications network as claimed in claim 1 ~~or claim 2~~, in which the telephone answering system is responsive to network signals identifying the calling party to associate a message received during the same call with a particular one of the plurality of customers.
4. A telecommunications network as claimed in claim 3, in which calls are selectively diverted to the telephone answering system or are connected to the network destination in dependence upon the network signals identifying the calling party line.
- claim  
x 5. A telecommunications network as claimed in ~~any preceding claim~~, in which calls for at least one of the plurality of customers of the network destination are required to be diverted to the telephone answering system while calls for at least one other of the plurality of customers are to be connected to the particular network destination the network being responsive to calls for the particular

network destination to provide information to the calling party line identifying each of the plurality of customers and responding to customer reaction thereto to connect the call either to the network destination or to the telephone answering system.

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6. A telecommunications network as claimed in claim 2, in which in the absence of a reaction to the information provided, a subsequently stored message is associated with more than one of the plurality of customers.

10 7. A telecommunications network as claimed in claim 2 ~~or claim 6~~, in which the telephone answering system is responsive to signalling from a calling party to associate a subsequently deposited message with each of the plurality of customers.

15 8. A telecommunications network as claimed in <sup>claim 1</sup> ~~any preceding claim~~, in which the telephone answering system is responsive to signalling identifying a particular one of the plurality of customers to play back respective messages stored for that customer.

20 9. A telecommunications network as claimed in claim 8, in which subsequent subsequent to delivery of messages for the particular customer messages not associated with any particular customer or associated with all of the plurality of customers are played to the calling customer.

25 10. A telecommunications network as claimed in claim 8 ~~or claim 9~~, in which subsequent to playing messages for the identified one of the plurality of customers the system causes a voice announcement indicative of the presence or absence of messages for other users at the same network destination.